

APEC WEF 2017

High Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy

Good morning, Minister Dao Ngoc Dung, chairman, ladies, and gentlemen.

I am greatly honored to have once more been given the opportunity to present a keynote speech during this year's Dialogue.

I am looking forward to sharing the latest developments with all of the Economies present here today.

I have been participating in the Dialogue on Women and the Economy at APEC since 2010.

Over the past seven years, the world has undergone many changes.

The economic gap has widened, and the threat of climate change due to global warming has increased.

Aging society and decreasing birth rates have been progressing rapidly.

Over a third of the Japanese population will be over 65 years old by 2024. Currently, over 100,000 people are leaving their jobs annually to provide nursing care.

Since a severe shortage in the working population is expected, it is imperative that we further accelerate the empowerment of women in the workforce.

Since I first became Mayor of Yokohama, a city with a population of 3.73 million, I have been working towards the empowerment of women.

I have especially focused on the large number of women in their 30s forced to leave their jobs due to childbirth and childcare.

In order to give these women a chance at achieving a good work-life balance, my first task was to reduce nursery waiting lists.

I accelerated private sector participation in nursery services and deployed experts in childcare services to help match parents with appropriate nurseries.

Because of this, Yokohama went from having the longest nursery waiting list in Japan — over 1500 names — all the way down to zero.

The response from working women has been overwhelmingly positive, and the number of infants in nurseries is increasing by 3,000 every year.

City-led career support programs for women have also been a success.

In Japan, the labor force participation rate for women in their late 30s is the lowest across all age

groups.

However, between 2010 and 2015, we were able to increase it from 59.6% to 66.2%.

Because of our efforts, the dip in the labor force participation rate of women in their 30s has been steadily improving.

Additionally, capitalizing on the rapid advances in ICT, the city of Yokohama offers subsidies and consultation services for SMEs in the city to help them introduce teleworking in order to overcome their shortage of employees.

Yokohama also offers incentives such as preferential treatment for public procurement to local companies actively working on improving the work-life balance of their employees.

As a result, many companies have started to revise and improve their work style.

Women's Empowerment has been steadily increasing.

However, the world is changing rapidly and women leaders are needed — more than ever — in order to bring the diverse range of perspectives needed to solve today's complicated issues.

Now is the time to enter the next stage of promoting work-life balance, which is to foster and appoint women leaders.

In Asia, the concept of gender roles is persistent, and it is hindering the emergence of women leaders.

However, it is time that we put an end to this perception and that both the public and private sectors take a collective step forward to cultivate women leaders in our societies.

Every year, over 1,500 women participate in city-led networking events for working women.

The city also offers career development and problem-solving programs for women aiming to become managers.

The Government of Japan has also acknowledged the need to take concrete action, and Yokohama is right there beside it.

Starting this year, Yokohama and the national government, will co-host a series of training programs for women aspiring to executive positions.

We are committed to increasing the number of women holding top leadership positions, which will give young women courage and role models, and lead to positive change in our society.

Over the past 15 years, Yokohama has dispatched over 120 waterworks experts to the city of Hue.

Specialists in both cities, including a number of women experts, have been working together to further improve the environment of their city.

However difficult a problem may seem to be, by working hand in hand and combining our strengths, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

We will continue our efforts to bring positive change both to individuals and society by raising awareness on the need for women's empowerment.

The day will come when women's social and political participation is taken as a matter of fact.

Let us work together to make that day happen within our lifetimes.

Thank you.